

**Commissioner's Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention Advisory Council**  
**Howard Dean Center, UVM Room, 307 South Street, Springfield VT**  
**October 24, 2012**

## **MINUTES**

### **PRESENT**

*Council Members: Jeff Fannon, Kim Brittenham, Nicole Mace, Jeff Francis, Tracey Tsugawa, Henri Sparks, Saben Littlefield, Ken Page, Kathy Johnson, Curtiss Reed, Robert Appel, Lucie Garand, Mill Moore*  
*Via LNV: Leah Soule, Lexie Federhen, Griffin Thomas, Justin Lambert*  
*DOE: Armando Vilaseca, Barbara Crippen, Mike Bailey, Charles Johnson, Maureen Gaidys*  
*Public: Christopher Myers, Lori Prue-Bertone, Jeanice Garfield*

### **WELCOME**

Frank Perotti, Superintendent, Springfield School District welcomed the group to Springfield. Chair Tsugawa explained that the council would be dividing into three smaller working groups to work on the three priorities identified at the last council meeting: training for staff, student leadership development, and data collection.

### **BRAINSTORMING SESSION:**

C. Johnson requested that the council first clarify the purpose of the council. Reed commented that he would like to see a subcommittee of the council have a discussion on core values. Page proposed that the group spend a few minutes answering the question, "In order to inform our work, the Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Advisory council believes in the following core values..." Chair Tsugawa asked the group to break into pairs and spend a few minutes discussing this question.

Each pair shared 2-3 of their ideas. Some of the ideas that were generated included:

- Every student has the right to feel safe, supported, and welcome in school and in the greater community
- Assistance to the bully and victim is essential to breaking the cycle
- Adults in schools must be skilled, informed, consistent, and intentional in dealing with such issues
- All of us who support education need to collaborate and cooperate, including families and community members outside of schools
- It is important to develop and publish rules around hazing, harassment and bullying so that students feel safe
- Creating a network of support for students is important so they feel empowered to address inappropriate behaviors in a positive manner

- Inappropriate behaviors (respect and safety) can cross generations - schools are an appropriate place to break these generational biases that affect our community
- Equity – we need to be sure everyone is treated fairly and feels that they belong
- Accountability – both adults and students have a shared sense of responsibility – we should not always rely on an adult to intervene, but adults need to feel empowered as well
- Out-of-the-box thinking, courage, and commitment are necessary to make these changes happen
- Student voice needs to be acknowledged/recognized as they are the experts

Chair Tsugawa asked for volunteer to craft a values statement for the council. Reed volunteered to do this and C. Johnson volunteered to assist.

Vilaseca summarized his understanding of the council's original task: Ultimately, our goal is to make sure that students feel safe in school and that there is a system in place at every school that allows for students to have a place to go to feel safe in reporting these issues. Chair Tsugawa added that the group was convened in order to better coordinate the multitude of resources (funding, curricular, trainers, etc.) in use across the state and elsewhere, and to make those resources available to all to assist in the work of creating safer schools in Vermont. Vilaseca added that the council's role as a clearinghouse of information and resources can support folks in the field by identifying what is working well and helping to coordinate professional development. Our purpose is not to hear individual complaints of harassment, hazing, or bullying, but to work at a higher level to support schools and community groups to make sure students feel safe in school.

## **WORK GROUPS:**

Council members split up into working groups and spent an hour identifying key issues, questions, and goals. Following the small group work, the entire council regrouped with a quick report from each working group. Coordinators were identified for each working group: Lambert for the Student Leadership Group, Moore for the Data Collection Group, and Fannon for the Training Group.

Working group summary notes:

### **Student Leadership Work Group**

Discussed how to define student leadership and came up with the following list of considerations:

- Engaging in peer to peer interaction as opposed to "teaching."
- Student-to-student handling of problems without falling into roles (e.g. victim & perpetrator).
- Organized activities implemented by students with adult supports.
- Student accountability with students calling on adults as needed.
- "Nothing about us without us."
- Youth should not shoulder the responsibility for ending bullying & harassment.
- Need to examine how to achieve the "and" in "students and teachers."
- Need to go beyond looking just through the lens of bullying and harassment, it's too narrow; if students were trained they could present workshops and model interventions with broader themes.
- Befriending, confronting, modeling, empowerment, confidence, capacity.
- Students need authentic power & authority to actually make decisions- no tokens.

Talked about what information we needed to set goals and came up with the following list of questions:

- What is currently going on in schools to address bullying/harassment? Can we get students to come to the council and talk to us?
- Who really wants to be a student leader?
- Are some students pushed into leadership roles?
- Does every school have student leadership?
- Are there really any best practice models for student leadership given the lack of inclusiveness and the failure to take cultural background into consideration?

Identified goals:

- A guarantee of student safety is the primary goal.
- Adult accountability is essential. Students give up on reporting to adults when the adults do nothing and there are no consequences for the adults. Current legal requirements are “toothless” if there is no adult accountability.
- Activities need to be more hands on (as opposed to just talking at students), involve a broader school community, and have an emphasis on making the school stronger (a cultural shift). Workshops have gotten old. There needs to be a fresh perspective. What networks exist that we can use?
- Put more emphasis on helping the perpetrator. Suspension from school equates to, “I don’t care enough about you to deal with your problems” and it doesn’t help. There need to be some in-school remedies; these remedies need to accommodate the perpetrator and victim switching of roles.
- There needs to be a common language and clear message for climate change training. It should be consistent and not piecemeal.
- Can we put together a website of student resources?

### **Training Work Group:**

Partial list of issues and needs that came out of the group’s discussion:

- Lack of understanding on what bullying and harassment are
- Who needs training: all adults who have contact with students in schools (teachers, para-educators, custodial staff, bus drivers, coaches, cafeteria staff, volunteers, etc.)
- When they should receive training: 1. New teacher/staff training (longer, more comprehensive), 2. Refresher teacher/staff training (brief, intentional review), 3. Pre-service teacher training (work with institutions of higher education on requirements and content)
- Content of training: intervention skills and practice, definitions of bullying and harassment, reporting procedures, consistency in school responses, understanding the impact of bullying and harassment
- Methods of training: some online but some must occur in person
- Need to develop a school wide, district wide system to support all the interventions taking place
- Need to identify appropriate behaviors
- Need input from students to understand what is going on in schools and to create effective interventions strategies
- Need to identify benchmarks, best practices for schools; staff are asking for models, examples, “how to” information, and forms to use

**Data Collection Work Group:**

The Data Collection working group compiled a list of potential sources of data and discussed how they should begin to compile a brief description of the bullying problem within Vermont schools. They plan to meet as a group to review data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Education Department data, and Human Rights Commission cases. They also discussed likely gaps in the data sources, particularly with respect to problems of bullying and harassment of or by adults in the schools, and they anticipate their review in this area would lead to recommendations for improved data collection.

Meeting adjourned at 3:52PM.